ARTICLE #1," Subparagraph 1k, Sociological Background

RELIGION

The population of Hungary is predominantly (65 per cent) Catholic. 162 795
Calvinists are second in importance (20 per cent), while Lutherans and Jews represent five per cent each, and the number of Unitarians and Greek Catholics is very small. None of these denominations is linked today with specific ethnic groups (there is, however, a preponderance of Calvinism in the Magyars); their geographical distribution is relatively even, with the percentage of Protestants rising slightly toward the east. Regardless of church adherence, 771 756
the present-day Christian religious life of the Magyar peasants still shows the relics of their ancient faith.

The primitive religion of the Magyars was shamanism associated with a kind of animal-totemism. Sorcery played an important part in their spiritual life and soothsayers held key positions in the retinues of the tribal chiefs. We have little material evidence of this primitive religion; no drums or other accessories of shamanistic rites used by the Magyars' ancestors have ever been found. However, the essentials of their funeral rites, as revealed [764]
by excavations, accord exactly with the shamanistic ceremonies of Inner-Asiatic tribes.

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[601].

The evidence supported by linguistics and modern folklore is even more conclusive. Many ancient personal and clan names (e.g. Gyula) have a totemistic derivation and similar evidences appear in the legends concerning the origins of the Magyars and their kings (cf. Subparagraph 1b)[1/A]. One of the most important motifs in Magyar folktales, "the tree reaching into the skies," also has its shamanistic equivalent. The táltos and garaboncás, Magyar folkloristic varieties of the shaman, fight in the air as do some antagonists in the shamanistic conception of the universe. Ancient nursery rhymes mention healing with drums. Other shamanistic motifs survive in popular customs and superstitions.

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In the primitive religion of the Uralic peoples, there was an intimate contact between the faithful and the spirits they worshipped. The relation between the Magyar peasant and God -- or between the peasant and the saints as intermediaries -- is a personal one although it would never attain the familiarity which exists between the Ob-Ugric peoples and their deities. These people feel a definite reciprocity between themselves and their idols: they pay the sacrifice and the idol who refuses the demanded assistance suffers their wrath. The Magyar peasant no longer pays sacrifices, unless in the form of candles lit or masses offered on the altar of the saint, but he is convinced that certain prayers and actions will result in the

1/A [see cat. 116, p. 7 -- Analyst]

granting of his request and he also feels offended if his prayers are unsuccessful, like the peasant of the well-known anecdote who went out to his fields during a hailstorm, grabbed a pole, and started to demolish the already damaged crop, shouting, "Come, Lord, let's see what the two of us can do!" 771

With the conversion of Prince Géza and the relentless missionary activity of his son, Saint Steven, and his successors, the original shamanism as the form of public worship was crushed. Nevertheless, the ancient religion continued to linger on and reports from the subsequent centuries, especially documents of witchcraft trials, indicate that among the people it still existed. Of course, this religion today is completely extinguished. However, many of its features survive in Christian practices (cf. the section on the annual ceremonies, Subparagraph 1h)[1] and in customs which are today considered as more superstitious than religious proper. 756 771

After the reformation relations between the Christian denominations in Hungary have developed toward a close mutual understanding. Transylvania, the little Hungarian principality, was the first to codify freedom of conscience in Europe. In the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth and partly the eighteenth centuries in Hungary, the wars and rebellions always had a certain religious undertone although never to the extent experienced by Western Europe in the Wars of Religion during the same period. Later, the 798

1/ [See cat. 116, pp. 83-86 -- Analyst]

nowadays, are often prohibited by the local Communist authorities or simply limited to the square around the church or even to the interior of the church. 795 [796]

The Protestants, besides worshipping on Sunday in their church, often gather in their homes in the evenings and read the Bible, sing hymns, and tell pious stories. [771] Hungarian folklore is rich in legends and tales of which a common subject are the wanderings of Christ among the peoples in the company of Saint Peter. [538]

The celebration of the Catholic parish feast is an occasion for joyous festivities in which the non-Catholic inhabitants also take part. [796]

Intermarriages between Catholics and Protestants are frequent in spite of the restrictions imposed by the Catholic Church which require a reversalis, [585] a document in which the non-Catholic party agrees that children issuing from the marriage shall be brought up in the Catholic faith.

Although there are no permanent sects in Hungary that preach healing by faith, men and women who claim to have charismatic virtue and to heal through laying on of hands and prayer arise occasionally among the peasantry and acquire a local and short-lived renown. They are called javasember or javasasszony. 756

With the 1945 land reform and later decrees, the Catholic Church has lost its large estates and even the land owned by local parishes were partly 659 793